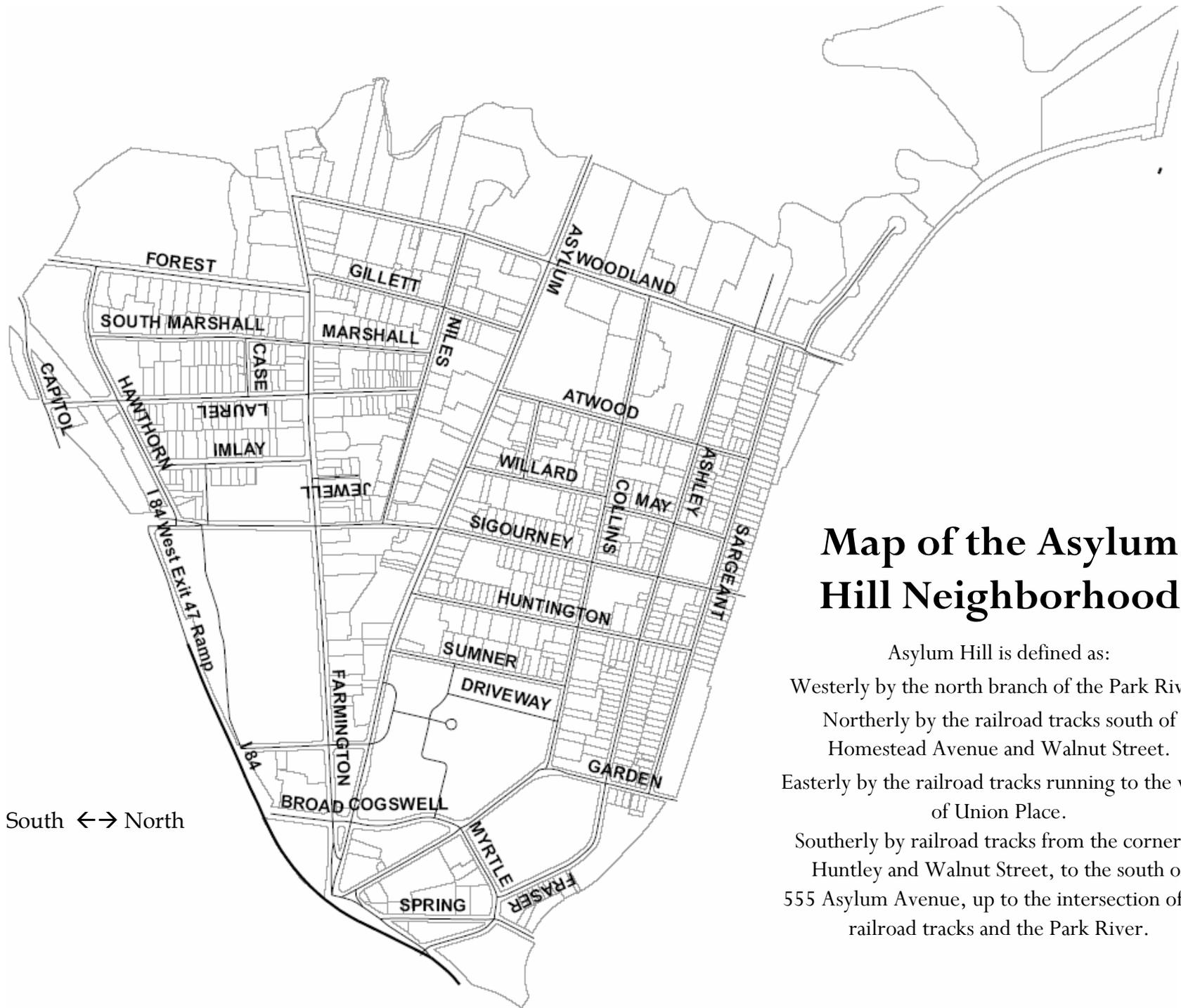




# Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA)



2009 Strategic Plan



## Map of the Asylum Hill Neighborhood

Asylum Hill is defined as:

- Westerly by the north branch of the Park River.
- Northerly by the railroad tracks south of Homestead Avenue and Walnut Street.
- Easterly by the railroad tracks running to the west of Union Place.
- Southerly by railroad tracks from the corner of Huntley and Walnut Street, to the south of 555 Asylum Avenue, up to the intersection of the railroad tracks and the Park River.



# Table of Contents

Neighborhood Vision	1
History of Asylum Hill	2
Neighborhood Characteristics	3
AHNA Organizational Health	4
Economic Development	5
Commercial Corridors	7
Green Spaces	9
Educational Opportunities	11
Historic Preservation	13
Recreation & Culture	15
Transportation	17
Public Safety	19
Housing	21
Land Use & Zoning	23
Neighborhood Improvement Plan	28
Acknowledgments	30



# Neighborhood Vision

The Asylum Hill neighborhood is attractive and welcoming with a unique mix of historical housing stock, corporate headquarters, major health facilities, small businesses, museums, churches, schools, multi-unit housing, a library and public transportation. These assets put Asylum Hill in an excellent position for neighborhood growth and development that will keep pace with Hartford's strategic growth plans. AHNA's vision for the future of Asylum Hill includes:

- Access to downtown Hartford and the region that is simple and safe for people on foot, bicycle, car or mass transit.
- New zoning and façade standards for Farmington Avenue businesses that encourage a mixed use neighborhood with businesses, shops and housing.
- An expansion of available housing for people of all economic levels.
- A high performance West Middle Elementary School that, with the Classical Magnet School and Hartford High School, attracts students and encourages families to move into the neighborhood.
- An expanded, coordinated mass transit system including Union Station and the Hartford/New Britain Busway to bring people into the neighborhood safely, inexpensively and efficiently.
- Beautification of the Farmington Avenue streetscape through new lighting, sidewalk repair, paving and medians.
- A new, state-of-the-art emergency room wing for St Francis Hospital that includes a helipad.
- A new library on the corner of Marshall Street and Farmington Avenue that will include parking.
- Rezoning portions of the neighborhood to encourage owner-occupied homes and reduce population density.



# History of Asylum Hill

Until 1849 when the railroad came to Hartford, the majority of the area's population lived along the banks of the Connecticut River. The railroad station defined the western edge of Hartford's population. The farmland west of the railroad station was, until the middle of the 19th century, known as Lord's Hill, named after one of Hartford's original settlers, Captain Richard Lord.

In 1807, Alice Cogswell, daughter of Dr. Mason Cogswell, became ill and was left permanently deaf. In 1821, Dr. Cogswell and ten influential colleagues founded a school for the deaf on Lord's Hill. The school became the Asylum for the Education of the Deaf & Dumb Persons and remained at its original location for 100 years. The street on which the school was built became Asylum Street, and soon, the area around the internationally famous school became known as Asylum Hill.

At the end of the 19th century, Asylum Hill swelled with new residents who worked downtown. During this period of rapid growth, John Hooker and Francis Gillette created a distinguished, aesthetic and intellectual enclave, known as Nook Farm, including residents Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose homes remain and are popular attractions.

Insurance companies have made Hartford the insurance capital of the world by establishing their home offices in the Asylum Hill area. This large-scale commercial growth displaced many Asylum Hill residences. Fortunately, many historic buildings remain and provide a living memory of the proud history of Asylum Hill.



# Neighborhood Characteristics

In the ten years between the 1990 and 2000 census, the population of Asylum Hill has changed measurably. The number of residents dropped by 14.5% or 1,803 people, and the ethnic makeup of the population has changed. The percentage of African Americans has decreased from 53% to 50%, Hispanics have increased from 20% to 29%, and “other” ethnicities rose from 3% to 7%. The White non-Hispanic portion of the population decreased from 25% to 14%. More than 20% of Asylum Hill’s residents are foreign-born, with more than 60% born in the Caribbean.

The number of families living in Asylum Hill dropped slightly, by 11.3%, and the percentage of female headed households rose from 31% to 40%. The percentage of families living in poverty also rose, from 23% to 40% and the percentage of children living in poverty increased from 25% to 49.4%.

Although fewer individuals in the neighborhood have a high school education or higher than they did in 1990 (68% in 2000 as compared to 71% in 1990), more residents are college graduates (17% as compared to 9%). Incomes, however, are declining. In 1990, Asylum Hill’s median household income was 85.5% of Hartford’s as a whole, but in 2000, the median household income in Asylum Hill had dropped to 76.9% of the city’s median household income. About 58% of Asylum Hill residents over 16 years old are in the labor force and 13% of those over 16 are unemployed.

Asylum Hill’s housing stock is predominantly rental; only 8% of the housing units are owner-occupied. Of the 5,291 housing units in Asylum Hill, only 353 or 13% are 1-4 unit buildings. The neighborhood has an extensive stock of Victorian homes, but the majority of housing units (70%) were built after 1950 and consist of many architecturally bland “box” apartments. 60% of all housing units in the neighborhood are located in buildings with 20 or more units.



# Asylum Hill Neighborhood Organization

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association (AHNA) formerly known as Asylum Hill Problem Solving Revitalization Association is a strong advocate for responsible development, single-minded in preserving its historical heritage, and proud to have open meetings that include as many people as possible in the decision-making process. AHNA strives to involve all those who live, work, worship or own property in the neighborhood.

AHNA is active and effective because of its committed volunteers with diverse opinions on the neighborhood. All AHNA participants are volunteers who reside, work, or are otherwise invested in the neighborhood. Significant assistance is received from local churches and corporate neighbors, including important contributions from Asylum Hill Congregational Church and Aetna, Inc. The association meets once a month.

To expand AHNA's ability to aid the neighborhood, AHNA is committed to obtaining federal non-profit 501(c)(3) status. Nonprofit status will allow AHNA to accept tax-deductible donations and grants, which can be used to hire staff to help with administration and recruitment.

In 2005, AHNA reenergized the association by adding more members. Former members contributed their experience and historical knowledge to this recruitment and revitalization effort. Together, longstanding and new members energized the Housing, Education, Transportation and Strategic Planning committees.

In the past three years, AHNA has taken a stand on many important issues including: identifying a new site for the Mark Twain Library, lobbying the preservation of a historical building slated for demolition, and preventing an undesirable development on Huntington Street. Looking to the future, AHNA will take action to implement the goals stated in this strategic plan.



# Economic Development

The Asylum Hill neighborhood is a positive economic contributor to Hartford, which is one of the poorest cities in America's wealthiest state. Within one square mile, residents live across the street from a number of the nation's most successful corporations (Aetna, The Hartford Financial Services Group), Hartford's most important historical resources (the Mark Twain & Harriet Beecher Stowe Houses), a cutting edge medical technology center (Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center), and a first class culinary institute (CT Culinary Institute). AHNA is continuously working to strengthen and maintain the relationships between these corporations and the community.

The neighborhood has a high percentage of rental units, which results in a more transient neighborhood than owner-occupied areas. In such a neighborhood, poverty may be common as wage-earners begin their working career. For decades, many near the bottom of the economic ladder had left Asylum Hill as they climbed up. Yet recently, those on their way up have made Asylum Hill their neighborhood of choice, in part, because of successful economic development. The neighborhood has prospered as residents have prospered.

Neighborhood economic development helps Asylum Hill maintain the diversity that keeps the neighborhood healthy. AHNA supports efforts to create employment and workforce housing opportunities in the neighborhood.



# Economic Development

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association encourages the following:

- The City of Hartford should work closely with AHNA to include mixed use transit oriented development into the Downtown West Redevelopment Plan.
- Remediation and sale of the Hawthorn Street industrial site for development as neighborhood friendly mixed use development.
- Implementation of an official streetscape program with incentives for store owners to have consistent and updated signage and store lighting after hours.
- Employers should fill positions from the pool of local residents whenever possible, especially entry level positions, which would reduce traffic congestion and strengthen the neighborhood fabric.
- Employers should create incentive plans to attract employees to consider residing in Asylum Hill.
- Social service agencies operating in Asylum Hill should seek out current residents in order to respond to local needs. These service entities should also share information and resources amongst their organizations when possible.
- New zoning should be adopted to encourage new, neighborhood-friendly retail businesses.



# Commercial Corridors

Asylum Hill has two main east/west streets, Farmington and Asylum Avenues, which serve as major access roads for residents and are gateways to downtown Hartford from the city's western suburbs. Historically, both streets were grand, wide avenues, lined with large homes. Beginning in the 1920's, large multi-story office and apartment buildings replaced these homes, and the avenues were developed into what is seen today.

Asylum Avenue includes residential and commercial areas and is anchored by two major institutions at each end: St. Francis Hospital and The Hartford Financial Services Group. In contrast, Farmington Avenue has the character of a neighborhood business district, with small shops interspersed among multi-unit apartments, condominiums, and major regional institutions such as Aetna, Cathedral of Saint Joseph, and the Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe Houses. The Woodland Street section of Asylum Hill, a north-south street that begins at Farmington Avenue, is comprised of apartments and condominiums, medical and professional offices, a regional magnet school, churches and the St. Francis Hospital complex. About 10,000 vehicles travel on each of these three main streets daily.

A large number of motorists driving through Asylum Hill never stop – they form an image of Asylum Hill by what they see through their windshields. While many of the buildings along Asylum Avenue are well maintained, with groomed lawns and elegant frontage, Farmington Avenue, despite a numbers of attractive buildings, has a less coherent architectural style.



# Commercial Corridors

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association encourages the following:

- *Implement Streetscape Plans for Farmington Avenue:* The first phase of Farmington Avenue streetscape improvements are designed, and construction between Marshall and Woodland Streets is expected to begin in 2010. The avenue will have medians in selected locations, upgraded crosswalks, and new pedestrian and street lighting. By 2010 funds should be identified to complete the streetscape project at the Farmington/ Asylum merge. For more details on the streetscape plan visit: [www.farmingtonavenue.org/html/planStreetPro.htm](http://www.farmingtonavenue.org/html/planStreetPro.htm).
- *Enhance Access Through Transportation:* In conjunction with streetscape improvements planned, AHNA and the Farmington Avenue Alliance encourage enhanced and streamlined bus service including: new bus shelters and safer bus turnouts.
- *Enforce Design Standards for Retail & Commercial Buildings:* Design standards include signage requirements, property maintenance, façade improvements, and style and scale of new buildings.
- *Encourage Greater Diversity of Retail Shops:* If new neighborhood friendly retail uses are created along commercial corridors Asylum Hill will be a safer and more attractive place for people to work, shop and play. It will also entice a greater number of people who now drive through the neighborhood's commercial corridors to stop and experience Asylum Hill.



# Environmental & Green Initiatives

Asylum Hill's green spaces impact all who live and work in the neighborhood - residents, non-profit organizations, and businesses. From park space to the tree canopy, Asylum Hill's green space enhances the beauty of this historic neighborhood and creates a place for residents to congregate.

Although Asylum Hill is densely developed, people enjoy a variety of green spaces that provide a nurturing environment for both plants and people, such as Sigourney Square Park, the Park River Watershed and community gardens located on Huntington, Niles and Sargeant Streets. However, these natural resources are often neglected. Public Works, local businesses and residents need to do more to keep Asylum Hill's parks and streets clean. Sigourney Square Park, located in the heart of Asylum Hill's residential area, is one of the most visible indications of neighborhood health. All of Asylum Hill's residents benefit when the park is kept clean and green.

Many Asylum Hill residents have taken action to conserve energy inside apartments and houses but more should be done. Reducing automobile use and installing energy efficient upgrades to windows and insulation are proven strategies to reduce energy consumption. It is important that Asylum Hill's school children are involved in seeking a greener future. Hartford public schools should teach good environmental habits, and AHNA supports the new Engineering and Green Technologies Academy at Hartford High School which will give students an opportunity to study green-space issues.



# Environmental & Green Initiatives

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association encourages the following:

- Supplement the Tree Canopy: Work with Knox Parks to complete a systematic review of the neighborhood to determine where trees could be planted or other green spaces created. See existing tree study: [www.knoxparks.org](http://www.knoxparks.org)
- Monitor and encourage green-space awareness in new developments, for example, around the former Hawthorn facility, in the area of Broad Street in front of the YWCA, and at 140 Garden Street. Developers will be encouraged to reuse materials and utilize Energy Star building practices.
- Work with the City of Hartford's Development Services to promote the adoption of environmentally friendly procedures for new construction or rehabilitation of existing residential and commercial structures.
- Encourage the City to conduct a feasibility study of local building permit requirements to incorporate environmental considerations that are at least as stringent as the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certification.
- Support resident's goals for increased energy conservation through increasing information distribution and financial support.
- Enhance Hartford's mass transit system to decrease automobile use, thus minimizing necessary street repairs.
- Ensure no new paved lots in the Asylum Hill area. Paved lots do not contribute to smart growth.



# Educational Opportunities

The Asylum Hill neighborhood has a wealth of educational opportunities for its residents. These resources create a broad range of resources for all ages. Asylum Hill's educational assets presently include:

- Public Education: Classical Magnet School, Hartford Public High (which includes the Law and Government Academy, Nursing Academy, and Engineering and Green Technologies Academy), West Middle Elementary School
- Private Education: Boys & Girls Club ([www.bgchartford.org](http://www.bgchartford.org)), Connecticut Culinary Institute ([www.ctculinary.edu](http://www.ctculinary.edu)), Asylum Hill Learning Zone and the Baby Academy ([www.ahlz.org](http://www.ahlz.org)), Covenant Preparatory School, Hartford Children's Theatre ([www.hartfordchildrenstheatre.org](http://www.hartfordchildrenstheatre.org)), School for Young Children on Asylum Hill ([www.ahcc.org](http://www.ahcc.org)), West Middle After School Program (ASP), YWCA, Hartford Conservatory, Connectikids ([www.ct-kids.org](http://www.ct-kids.org))
- Educational partners and advocates working to improve Asylum Hill education: Aetna Inc., Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), Community Services Inc., Connecticut State Department of Education, CT Parents Plus, The Hartford Financial Services Group, Saint Joseph College



# Educational Opportunities

These educational assets focus AHNA's vision on the future of education in Asylum Hill. The educational vision includes support for:

- The School Superintendent's plan for student choice in the school they attend.
- The expansion of educational collaborations with local non-profits and churches to reach a greater number of those in need within the neighborhood.
- Improve public education to insure all middle and high-school students in Asylum Hill are performing at or above grade level.
- Reduction of current drop-out rates.
- Change of West Middle School to a community school format that integrates school improvement with community development.
- Creation of additional after-school opportunities for Asylum Hill's middle and high school students.
- Encourage Hartford colleges to study, research and create strategies to address neighborhood problems including: poverty, homelessness, and educational achievement of students in local schools.
- Encourage new adult continuing education and worker training programs at local schools and businesses.
- For details on the school system, demographics and statistical information go to: [www.hartfordschools.org](http://www.hartfordschools.org).



# Historic Preservation

The rich tapestry of architectural styles in the Asylum Hill neighborhood make it one of Hartford's most historic neighborhoods. Asylum Hill contains grand Victorian residences, apartment houses, large institutional buildings, and churches from several important time periods in Hartford's history.

Asylum Hill faces pressures that threaten the survival of its historic structures – a decline of home ownership, increasing energy costs, increasing taxes, and institutional expansion into residential areas. However, within the last decade, significant and successful programs have addressed these pressures. Corporate and private efforts have developed an increased awareness of the value of historic preservation.

The Asylum Hill Neighborhood Association supports historic preservation and the following:

- *End the demolition of buildings to create surface parking.* The need for surface parking can be reduced by biking, car-pooling and the use of mass transit. Businesses should consider in-structure parking, such as basement garages, in new construction. Multi-level parking garages are a more efficient use of property than surface parking.
- *Preserve and re-use historic buildings.* The neighborhood encourages the preservation of historic structures as residences and combinations of commercial and residential use.



# Historic Preservation

- *Historically Compatible Building.* New construction should match the neighboring structures in height, lot coverage, and scale. Traditional materials, like brick and wood, should be encouraged, to reflect the varied facades of the Victorian buildings that dominate Asylum Hill. AHNA supports the use of the official city "Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings" and environmentally sound "green" construction practices.
- *Encourage the use of tax credits and subsidized loans.* Homeowners may be eligible for state and federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits, which help defray restoration costs. However these programs require substantial initial investments by homeowners. The City should work with the Hartford Preservation Alliance to help residents with home renovations in accordance with Historic Preservation Commission requirements. Additionally a fund should be created by the City to assist homeowners perform improvements on their historic properties. City funds can be matched by private donations which will help increase homeownership by reducing the cost of renovations. Homeownership is a leading factor in the protection of historic homes.
- *Identify historic properties.* Historic properties gain protection when listed on a Local, State, or National Register of Historic Places. AHNA will study the enlargement of the Asylum Hill Historic District to add greater protection to historic structures under the Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- *Work with other organizations to further historic preservation.* AHNA will collaborate with the Hartford Preservation Alliance and Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance to create historic walking tours and preservation projects that increase neighborhood pride in Asylum Hill's abundant historic properties.



# Recreation and Culture

The Asylum Hill neighborhood has a long and active history of support for and participation in arts and culture. During the next ten years, Asylum Hill will see new vitality in neighborhood arts and culture. Asylum Hill adults, children, and visitors to the neighborhood will have much to enjoy. AHNA will:

- Support the relocation of the Mark Twain Branch of Hartford Public Library to a larger space with parking. The goal is to create a library with more room for books, audiovisuals, programs, computers, and patrons.
- Work with the Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe Houses to ensure their sustainability as museums in Asylum Hill.
- Encourage the development of academic programs among neighborhood students, members of the Boys and Girls Club and the Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher Stowe Houses to encourage learning about American history.
- Create new outreach programs to make music and arts opportunities in the neighborhood better known and more accessible by working with the Hartford Conservatory, Hartford Children's Theatre, Mark Twain House and Asylum Hill Congregational Church.



# Recreation and Culture

- Continue Connecticut Public Broadcasting Network's special programs to strengthen collaborations among cultural organizations, encourage the exchange of ideas, and create an informal source of community cultural knowledge. Neighborhood participation in these programs encourages a more informed, engaged and involved citizenry, and opens dialogue across "boundaries" about community concerns by bringing together citizens from diverse backgrounds.
- Support community theater productions and family activities in Sigourney Square Park. The park is a perfect location to bring families and culture together.
- Connect the arts community to the neighborhood by offering annual open houses, free museum and theatre passes, talent shows for scholarships and other community events.
- Work with local high schools to create an oral history of long-time residents discussing the changes in Asylum Hill during the last 50 years.
- Nurture relationships between local churches and the Asylum Hill neighborhood to undertake community initiatives, such as establishing a leadership role at the Boys & Girls Club and tutoring at West Middle Elementary School.



# Transportation

AHNA supports initiatives to expand and enhance mass transit service, by rail and bus, within Asylum Hill. AHNA also supports the New Britain/Hartford busway, New Haven/Springfield rail connections, a North/South city bus route, express buses on the major avenues and improved passenger amenities

Mass transit at Union Station and at Hawthorn Street along the Hartford/New Britain busway will provide opportunities for transit-oriented development in the neighborhood and the city of Hartford. With renovation, Union Station could be a world class facility encouraging retail and commercial growth in the area.

AHNA supports development of a “complete streets” policy ([www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)) that guides transportation-related agencies and applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, and maintenance to enhance traffic flow. AHNA prioritizes the safe design and operation of all roadways to encourage pedestrians, bicyclists and motor vehicles. Signage and streetscape elements (e.g. sidewalks, light fixtures, benches, trash receptacles, etc.) should be of uniform design and friendly to the environment. New street openings and evaluation of one way streets can also improve Asylum Hill’s “complete streets” policy.

Traffic calming, particularly on Asylum Avenue and Farmington Avenue, should be studied and implemented. All traffic calming projects should be consistent with the “complete streets” policy.



# Transportation

AHNA encourages the following:

- Exploration of opportunities to restore the original street grid and reduce block size in the neighborhood which has been compromised with the development of multi-block developments and street closures. A revised street grid may be more efficient in distributing traffic and in facilitating pedestrian and bicycle travel.
- Restricting the development of new surface parking areas while concurrently promoting alternative development of existing surface parking lots.
- Development of a transportation plan that encourages mixed use development along the corridors of the eastern portion of the neighborhood to re-connect the Asylum Hill neighborhood to downtown Hartford. Capitol West, 140 Garden Street and the parking lot north of Union Station offer key opportunities for reconnection.
- Promotion of mass transit in Asylum Hill including the New Britain/Hartford busway, more efficient bus service, new bus shelters and use of the railroad as a passenger line (Griffin Line).
- Reduction of curb cuts, setbacks and street closures to connect communities and facilitate pedestrian traffic.
- Work with the City of Hartford to develop bike routes and bike parking.
- Promote the redesign of I-84 to reduce the negative impact of the highway which divides the City and creates vast unusable space.



# Public Safety

Asylum Hill has one of the lowest incidences of quality of life crimes in the greater Hartford area. These quality of life crimes include public drinking, loitering, trespassing, prostitution, and aggressive panhandling. Although these crimes have a lower priority with the Hartford Police Department than more serious crimes, the neighborhood would like to eliminate the remaining quality of life problems that affect perception of public safety and neighborhood market values.

AHNA's goal is to make Asylum Hill safe for all those who live, work, worship, shop and play in the community.

AHNA plans to ensure public safety, including best efforts to:

*–Promote the Visibility of the Hartford Police Department*

- **Additional Officers:** The neighborhood experiences poor police response time to quality of life incidents and lack of overall police presence, especially in residential neighborhoods. In 2008 the HPD had 88 fewer officers than the 1985 peak of 501. The city has committed to 440 officers by August of 2009. By 2012, AHNA would like to see a staff of at least 480 police officers.
- **Community Events:** To improve the perception of the HPD and instill community values in neighborhood youth, the HPD should be more engaged in neighborhood events. These events include hosting public safety fairs, speaking at the Boys & Girls Club or creating a neighborhood basketball games for local officers and youth. Events should be held at least quarterly in order to build relationships between residents and officers.



# Public Safety

– *Support Quality of Life Police Operations* - Crimes such as public drinking, loitering, disturbing the peace and prostitution prevent homeownership, community involvement and promote Part I crimes. Officers should focus more intently on quality of life crimes to improve safety and perception of the neighborhood. AHNA encourages prevention of such crimes by increasing the number of vice and narcotics operations conducted in the neighborhood.

- *Quality of Life Crimes: Establish Clear Objectives and Measures Relative to Crime Rates* - The HPD has developed local crime benchmarks, however they have not compared the city's performance relative to other cities (e.g. achieving a City-Data.com crime rating of 626 or less within 48 months.) A public crime-tracking website should be established that includes crime statistics and achievable goals for quality of life issues.

– *Leverage Technology* – Identify new innovative methods for proactively addressing crime. Ensure local officers receive up-to-date equipment including laptops, cameras, and other electronic devices which enhance their ability to serve the community.

– *Encourage and Support Collaboration* - AHNA encourages the HPD to integrate successful third party security operations into a cohesive force, using communication tools that operate together and share data and training.

– *Encourage a Holistic Approach to Public Safety*: Support coordinated community oriented policing, probation and parole education, substance abuse rehabilitation, employment opportunities and other programs aimed at those most at risk of becoming offenders.



# Housing

Asylum Hill has one of the largest concentrations of intact historic homes in the state, but most of these historic homes are not owner-occupied. Asylum Hill has a homeownership rate of 8%, while Hartford’s homeownership rate is 24%, and the national rate is 68%. Over recent decades, owner-occupancy in Asylum Hill has decreased, and AHNA supports efforts to reverse this trend. Many of the neighborhood’s grand homes attract non-resident investors who subdivide these large properties into apartments and rooming houses; AHNA believes the neighborhood would be improved by owner-occupied homes.

Asylum Hill contains one of the state’s largest concentrations of rehabilitation homes. “Rehabilitation homes”, as defined in Hartford Ordinance, Sec. 30-1, are residences for people who live in a common building for the purpose of undertaking a program of social rehabilitation or a similar program. Recently, developers and property managers have utilized the residential category of “supportive housing” where occupancy is restricted to the same population as rehabilitation homes, but the residents receive social services off-site. Because the City’s zoning code does not define the term “supportive housing”, developers are avoiding the intent of zoning ordinances by providing rehabilitative services off-site. They assert that new homes are “supportive housing” and not rehabilitative homes subject to the City’s zoning ordinances. Accordingly, the City should create new housing definitions that recognize current social service trends to insure that zoning laws serve their purpose. In addition, AHNA encourages the City to develop a new zoning classification that includes all restricted housing, where “restrictive housing” means any residence where occupancy is restricted to a particular subpopulation and is not available to the general population.



# Housing

Although homeownership and preservation of historic homes are a key priority, AHNA recognizes the contribution to the community of those who live in Asylum Hill's many affordable and rehabilitative housing units. These units house community members who increase ethnic and financial diversity. Many of these complexes are well maintained, however, others decrease nearby property values and attract illegal activity.

The Asylum Hill Land Use plan (p. 26) addresses the challenges presented by supportive housing and other issues. The key housing goals of AHNA include:

- Ensure the Hartford Planning Division refers all owners/developers engaging in new construction or petitioning for a change of land use to get approval of AHNA's Housing & Economic Development Committee.
- Collaborate with Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (NINA) and the Hartford Preservation Alliance to implement these housing initiatives.
- Support for an increase in homeownership and owner-occupied apartment buildings.
- Adoption of the AHNA Zoning and Land Use plans.
- Reduction of neighborhood density by encouraging construction of one and two family homes.
- Redefine and reduce the density of supportive and rehabilitative housing.
- Support tenant rights.
- Encourage enforcement of the City's Anti-Blight Ordinance for abandoned, neglected properties.



# Land Use & Zoning

Asylum Hill has a diverse mixture of large corporations, small businesses, non-profits, residential, educational and public use facilities. Asylum Hill's two major commercial corridors, Farmington and Asylum Avenues contain examples of all these uses; however no cohesive land use plan has been developed to encourage smart growth and economic development. In 2007, AHNA designed both a land use and specific zoning map to address this issue. The amendment is still pending implementation by the City of Hartford Planning Division. The AHNA Land Use and Zoning plans address the challenges outlined in the Housing section of this Strategic Plan and other goals.

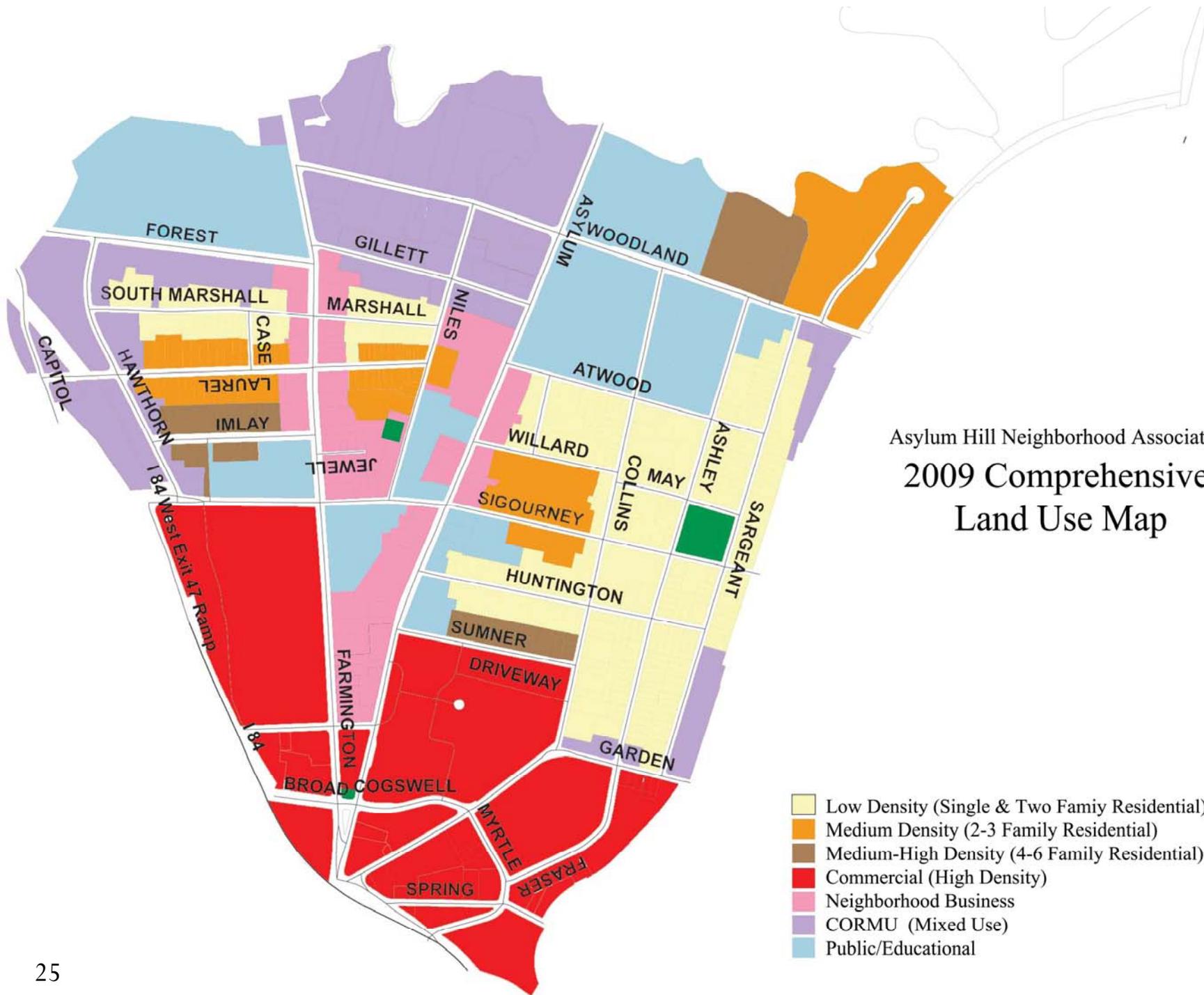
Because land use and zoning changes must come from the City of Hartford, AHNA will work with city government to:

- *Amend the Land Use and Zoning Maps of Asylum Hill by 2010:* AHNA submitted a zoning amendment in Spring 2007 to Hartford's Planning Department requesting land use and zoning changes within Asylum Hill. These changes included rezoning of the residential area of Sigourney Square to promote homeownership and preserve historic properties, and a new land use map to express the neighborhood's goals and guide future land use and development. Asylum Hill's proposed Land Use Map and Zoning Map follow this text.



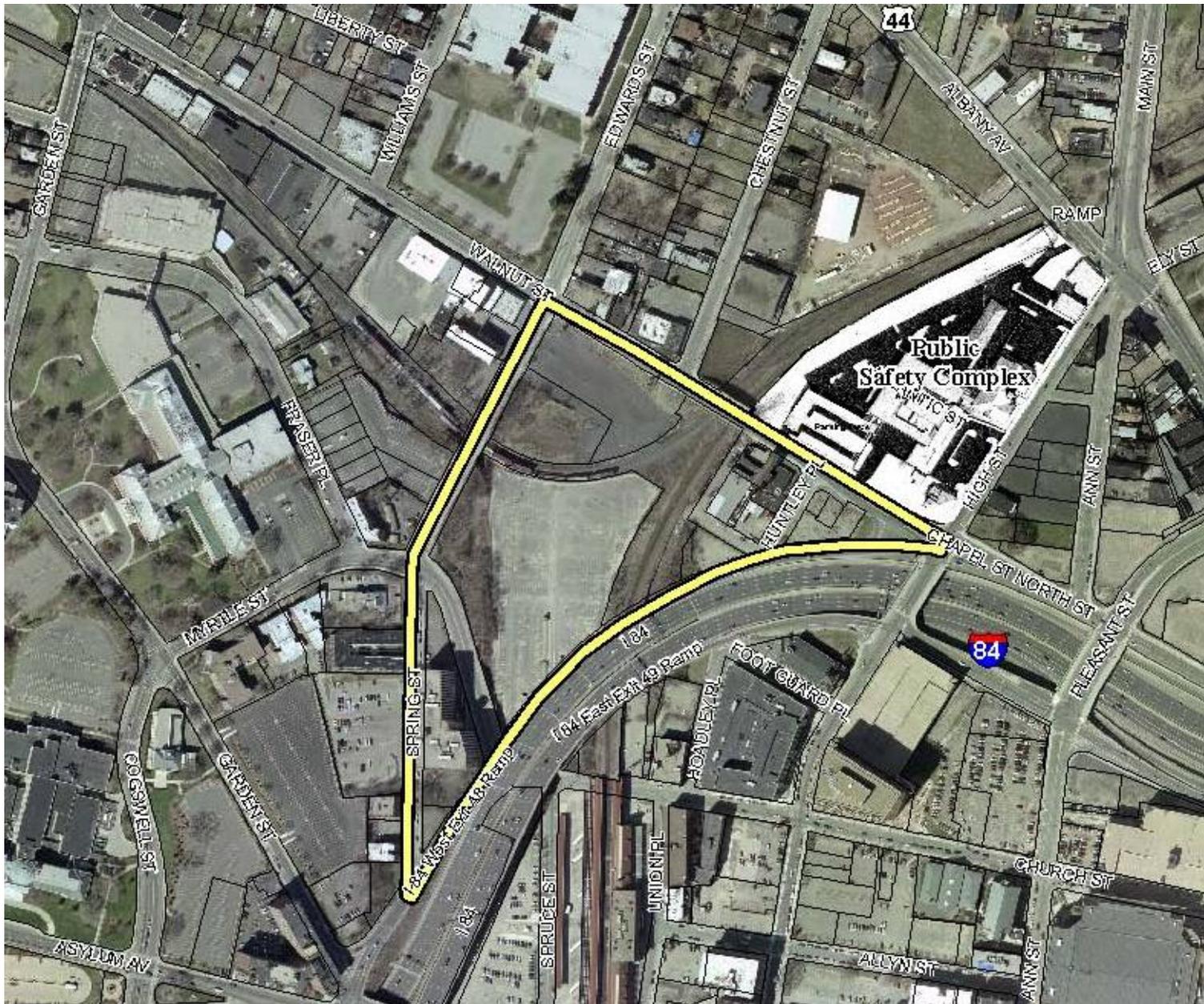
# Land Use & Zoning

- *Encourage Neighborhood-Friendly Retail:* By rezoning Asylum Hill, AHNA hopes to create more stringent standards for local retail outlets and stimulate economic development by creating diverse retail opportunities for needed services and limit the operation of liquor and convenience stores and bars in residential locations.
- *Expand the Business Improvement District:* Collaborate with the Downtown Business Improvement District to include additional portions of Asylum Hill within the district.
- *Enforcement of Hartford's Anti-Blight ordinance:* AHNA will assist the City of Hartford in identifying blighted property and publicly encourage city government to enforce its ordinance.
- *Support the City's Redevelopment Plan:* AHNA strongly endorses the City's plan to create a new transportation oriented development in the space located north & west of Union Station. This plan will connect Asylum Hill to downtown in a pedestrian friendly manner and eliminate the blighted Capitol West Building. See p. 27.





# Hartford Redevelopment Agency Downtown West Map





# Neighborhood Improvement Plan

This Strategic Plan was created by the Asylum Hill Strategic Planning Committee to describe the neighborhood and express AHNA's hopes and goals for the future. The committee has identified specific tasks that, if achieved, will improve the neighborhood and make Asylum Hill a more desirable place to live, work, and play. The following ten tasks have been identified as AHNA's top priorities to achieve by 2019:

1. *Promote Smart Growth for Undeveloped or Abandoned Property:* Create incentives for developers to avoid demolition by encouraging rehabilitation and green construction. If demolition is necessary, avoid development of more paved lots.
2. *Attract New Business to Asylum Hill:* Identify and promote opportunities for new commercial development within Asylum Hill to replace employers who have left the neighborhood and encourage new small businesses.
3. *Develop Streetscape Improvement Projects:* Create attractive residential and commercial spaces throughout Asylum Hill by redesigning lighting, walkways, bus stops, and signage on Farmington and Asylum Avenues.
4. *Re-evaluate Traffic Plans:* Encourage meetings between the AHNA's Transportation Committee and City of Hartford's Department of Public Works to improve traffic calming, street openings and public transportation.
5. *Support Educational Advancement:* Work with the City to improve Asylum Hill's public and private schools by striving for higher achievement classifications and reducing drop-out rates.



# Neighborhood Improvement Plan

6. *Address Quality of Life Issues:* Coordinate with officials from the Northwest District of the Hartford Police Department (HPD) to identify new ways to eliminate quality of life issues such as prostitution, loitering, public drinking and drug dealing. Also encourage the expansion of the HPD to include additional officers.
7. *Encourage Low Density Residential Development:* Seek zoning changes that encourage construction of low density, one and two-family residential homes and resist conversion of existing homes into apartments or rooming houses.
8. *Identify and Develop Plans to Encourage Owner-occupied Homes:* Identify private and governmental programs that can assist the purchase and maintenance of owner-occupied homes.
9. *Establish AHNA's Leadership in Support of Appropriate Zoning for Restricted Housing and Encourage the City of Hartford to Enforce Restrictive Housing Ordinances to Avoid Over Concentration:* Work with elected officials, non-profits, and support organizations to insure their understanding that Asylum Hill has more than met its obligation to provide restricted residential housing, and seek solutions that involve neighboring towns to meet the social need for restricted housing.
10. *Create Economic Incentives for Historic Preservation:* Encourage financial support for historic home restoration and make a community effort to meet the Historic Preservation Commission guidelines.



# Acknowledgements

- City of Hartford Department of Development Services
- Northside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, Inc. (NINA)
- Hartford Preservation Alliance
- Hartford 2000
- Hartford Public Library
- Farmington Avenue Alliance
- Asylum Hill Strategic Planning Committee: *Special Thanks to Bernie Michel, AHNA Chair*

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# Attachments

- Action and Implementation Plan
- Priority Projects Map
- Membership of AHNA Board and Strategic Planning Committee
- AHNA Bylaws
- Description of the Stakeholder Participation Process and Plan Committee.
- Minutes of the Public Hearing